



PSC NEWS

Missouri Public Service Commission

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PSC CHAIRMAN APPLAUDS POTENTIAL LIHEAP FUNDING INCREASE..... ENCOURAGES MISSOURI GENERAL ASSEMBLY TO ACT ON LOW-INCOME BILLS

Jefferson City (May 6, 2002)---While a conference committee must still iron out the final figures, it appears that more help may be on the way in the form of federal funding for low-income utility customers as the winter of 2002-03 approaches.

"I am very encouraged by the numbers that I have seen regarding federal authorization for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)," stated Missouri Public Service Commission Chairman Kelvin Simmons. "Both the United States Senate and House have passed versions of the Energy Policy Act of 2002 with LIHEAP authorizations of approximately \$3 billion or more which is an increase over previous funding," stated Simmons. "I am hopeful that a compromise can be worked out and additional dollars for LIHEAP will be realized through President Bush's signature."

"In a letter sent to the Missouri Congressional delegation last August, I strongly urged them to support at least \$3 billion in LIHEAP funding nationwide," stated Chairman Simmons. **"I applaud both chambers' efforts in supporting additional dollars to aid those in need. I would like to recognize the hard work and effort on this issue by Missouri Senators Christopher Bond and Jean Carnahan. They saw the need for additional funding and have worked hard to try and make it happen,"** stated Simmons. **In addition, Missouri Governor Bob Holden also sent a letter to President Bush seeking additional LIHEAP funds which would benefit Missourians.**

In addition to LIHEAP funding, the Missouri Public Service Commission recognized a need to help those who faced high natural gas bills and faced disconnection heading into last winter.

The Commission implemented an emergency amendment to the PSC Cold Weather Rule which relaxed requirements to keep service on or to get service restored. "Most of our natural gas companies worked with us on the emergency amendment and we were able to help many low-income citizens keep their heat on last winter."

With the real potential of increased federal dollars for LIHEAP as well as the PSC's emergency amendment to the Cold Weather Rule to help Missouri's low-income, Chairman Simmons also continues to seek assistance from the Missouri Legislature on behalf of those in need.

IMPORTANT STATE LEGISLATION NEEDED

“We would ask that the Missouri legislature, in the remaining days of the session, pass legislation which would help low-income utility customers. These bills would not impact the already tight state budget,” stated Chairman Simmons.

The PSC continues to seek support for legislation which would allow the Public Service Commission to allocate certain natural gas pipeline refunds and penalties to specific customer classes such as the low-income. In addition, the legislature has before it a bill that would allow the PSC to approve special rates and programs for low-income utility customers.

These pieces of legislation have the support of Governor Bob Holden's Energy Task Force and are a part of the Governor's legislative package for this session. In addition, these bills were part of a recommendation contained in a report filed by the PSC's Natural Gas Commodity Price Task Force in August 2001.

“The time is now to act on these important bills,” stated Chairman Simmons. “If we wait and natural gas prices rise heading into this winter, it will be too late to help those most in need.”